

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE



National Child Support Strategic Plan

The national child support program has a long history of program innovation, performance measurement, and continuous improvement. Every five years, our community engages in a consensus-building process to create a new national strategic plan that will further strengthen the program and lead it into the future.

This month, we published the [National Child Support Strategic Plan for 2015-2019](#). The plan reflects the collaborative efforts and diverse perspectives of the state, tribal, and county child support

agencies that — along with the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement — make up the national program. The plan is organized around five principles that represent a coherent vision for the future of the program.

- 1 FAMILIES FIRST**
A family-centered child support program partners with parents to promote consistent support payments.
- 2 CASE-SPECIFIC TOOLS**
An effective child support program uses the right tools to meet the needs of the specific case.
- 3 MODERN TECHNOLOGY**
An efficient child support program incorporates modern technology.
- 4 RESOURCEFUL LEADERSHIP**
An enterprising child support program leverages sufficient resources to meet its mission.
- 5 EVIDENCE-BASED**
A high-performing child support program is evidence-based.

In addition to these five principles, the plan lays out 25 goals and more than a hundred innovative strategies that many state, tribal, and county child support agencies are already putting into practice.

To ensure the continued effectiveness of the program, the national plan recognizes the relationship among program resources, technology, and performance and identifies strategies to address aging systems. In this issue, state Child Support Director Kate Cooper Richardson gives us a great example of this interplay in describing her state's systems upgrades process in "How Oregon is building a 21st century automation system." Another article highlights the information that will be available to the tribal child support programs through access to the Federal Parent Locator Service.



National Reentry Week April 24-30

Find information in our [reentry resources](#) to help parents who are incarcerated or returning to their communities and read how [child support has a role in parents' successful reentry](#).

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The national strategic plan strongly emphasizes the importance of child support income to child and family well-being and focuses on a range of evidence-based and locally tested strategies to collect more child support by strengthening both the ability and willingness to pay. Illinois reports on one county's new accountability court in this issue, and we feature a Parenting Time Opportunities for Children grant success story from San Diego.

While use of the strategic plan by child support agencies is voluntary, many jurisdictions use the national plan to help build their own plans. The national plan may be a particularly effective tool for agencies to highlight family-centered strategies alongside conventional enforcement practices. In this way, the plan recognizes approaches that will help the child support program serve all families more effectively — now and into the future.

Vicki Turetsky



Financial Literacy Month

April is Financial Literacy Month. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has a toolkit that can help child support professionals discuss finances with clients. Read [Your Money, Your Goals](#) to find out more.

SPOTLIGHT ON SYSTEMS UPGRADES

How Oregon is building a 21st century automation system

**Kate Cooper Richardson, Child Support Director,
Oregon Child Support Program**

If you want to find out exactly when Oregon's current Child Support Enforcement Automated System (CSEAS) came into existence, try asking a few of the program's more-seasoned staff members. Answers range from the sincere "I think it's from the 70s, or 80s, or 90s, or something," to the snarky "some point between the invention of fire and the invention of the wheel." When Oregon Child Support Program staff members who measure their tenure in decades aren't even certain, it's safe to make this general assessment: CSEAS is way old.

On their first day of employment, many new program staff mistake CSEAS for MS-DOS when they see the "green screens." This is their introduction to CSEAS' 170+ screens with catchy nicknames like SJ7F, SMU1, and SMAC. Basic CSEAS training typically takes six to nine *months*, which is time new employees could be working directly with our 230,000 families.

CSEAS — our workhorse — has been handling our case management and accounting needs for roughly 20 years. Unfortunately, meeting the 21st-century needs of Oregon's families with 20th-century technology is increasingly difficult and time-consuming.

Staff members identified more than 4,000 requirements our new system would need to meet to join the modern age.

Planning the move forward

Oregon stepped off toward the future a few years ago and is trudging toward this century. We completed an in-depth feasibility study to determine what requirements we needed and wanted, and what it would take to build such a system. We chose a hybrid approach. We'll be using the base system functional and technical components from California's system. We'll augment it with components from the systems of Michigan and New Jersey.

Figuring out what to build is one thing — paying for it is another. With some coaxing, Oregon's legislature approved issuing short-term capital bonds over the life of the project, which helps spread the cost out over the life of the multi-year project. With the federal approval of Oregon's Implementation Advance Planning Document, [federal funding](#) was there to match the state's contribution.

Not surprisingly, Oregon didn't want to build a new system to support outdated business processes, many of which were

workarounds because of the limitations of CSEAS. Over the course of several months, we held extensive business process reengineering sessions where staff members identified more than 4,000 requirements our new system would need to meet to join the modern age.

Building a team

The Oregon Child Support Program — and our lead agency, the Department of Justice — have “skilllz,” but the magnitude of this project was beyond what we could do alone. Oregon brought on several contractors to perform the following functions: project management, quality assurance, independent verification & validation (IV&V), and a system integrator to actually *build* the system.

On October 20, we officially kicked off our Child Support System Project with an outstanding All Program/All Contractors event and invited our partners and stakeholders. Four hundred people attended, including Oregon’s Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum. OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky addressed the multitudes via video. We made a video recording of the event for those who couldn’t be there. It was a great way to introduce the contractors and build excitement for the project both internally and externally. It also helped build trust in the process for the staff around the state.

Communication and planning

We’re now deep into strategic sessions for functional and technical design. While it does create a strain on resources to have our child support program subject matter experts (SMEs, affectionately “smeez”) participating in these intense weekly sessions, we continue to make our regular work with customers our highest priority.

Communication is paramount to the success of a project of this magnitude, so we have poured great time and effort

into creating a series of five communication plans. They are key to providing regular and appropriate communication within the project, within the program, and with our partners, stakeholders, legislators, and the public.

Managing change

The largest aspect of Oregon’s communication strategy is organizational change management. We knew we were not only modernizing our system, we were transforming our program. We’ve brought in experts and built a team to focus on organizational change throughout the project.

This focused effort is what brings the staff along in the journey, solicits their participation, creates excitement and buy-in, and helps alleviate fears and anxieties about change. It is important to inform our entire agency of project developments, while continuously seeking their input and ideas.

One particularly successful communication strategy to date is the creation of an internal system project website. This go-to site houses basic project information, newsletters, videos, sneak peeks, feedback forms, and much more. We’re also looking forward to rolling out a name for the new system, which is a great opportunity for another step into the 21st century. We know one thing: it won’t be an acronym!

There’s a long road ahead — from design to building, testing, and rollout — that’s measured in months and yes, years. But we *really are* finally replacing the archaic CSEAS, built at some point between the Stone Age and the 1990s. Oregon *really is* moving our Child Support Program into this century — tomorrow is becoming today!

For more information on Oregon’s system modernization, contact Karen Coleman, System Project Executive, at karen.coleman@doj.state.or.us.



Team members taking part in a joint application design session.

Tribal access to the Federal Parent Locator Service

Paige Hausburg, OCSE

In 2014, the President signed Public Law 113-183 — the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 — that included several key provisions for improved child support services. Section 302 gave OCSE the authority to provide tribal child support offices with access to the [Federal Parent Locator Service](#) (FPLS). Starting in October 2014, the federal office held a series of telephone calls, meetings, and consultations with tribal child support offices to work out details for future tribal access to the system.

Gaining access

OCSE issued [Tribal Dear Colleague Letter 16-01](#) in February to describe how tribal child support programs can access the FPLS. Because tribes will access the data through the Child Support Portal, they have a series of steps they have to accomplish before OCSE can grant them access. The letter outlines the requirements.



Information available

The FPLS maintains different types of information about parents. The data is located in the following systems that will be available to tribes once their paperwork is in order.

- National Directory of New Hires: the national registry of employment, wage, and unemployment application and benefit information. Annually, the registry receives about 625 million wage records from state workforce and federal agencies and 35 million unemployment applications or benefit records from state workforce agencies.
- Federal Case Registry (FCR): a nationwide registry of child support cases. It contains 20 million case records and information on 27 million parents and 21 million children. Tribal programs are not required to send tribal case information to the FCR; however, tribal programs will benefit from the information the FCR holds.
- External locate matches provide the following data from these federal agencies:
 - Department of Defense — information on active duty personnel, reservists, and retired military personnel
 - Veterans Affairs — beneficiary data
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation — information on active, inactive, and retired employees
 - Social Security Administration — disability and retirement income; Supplemental Security Income; death information; and information on prisoners in 5,407 federal, state and local facilities
- DoD Entitlement: a portal application that allows tribes to request military entitlement information on noncustodial parents, putative fathers, and custodial parents. It may only be used to establish or modify child support orders.

For more information about FPLS access to the Child Support Portal, contact Linda Boyer at linda.boyer@acf.hhs.gov.

\$760 million in child support collections is attributed to NDNH matches in 2015.

Partnerships and innovative approaches to serve minorities

James Murray, OCSE

In honor of April being National Minority Health Month, I wanted to take a moment to recognize our outreach to minority communities. In 2008, 84 percent of poor custodial families participated in the child support program, including 88 percent of poor African American custodial families.

Noncustodial parents with low incomes and few job prospects face significant barriers to fulfill financial support so they generally accrue more child support debt. That causes some to avoid the child support agency and, often, see less of their children. Minority parents are disproportionately represented in low-income, unemployed, incarcerated, and reentering populations, all of which OCSE has taken a proactive approach to serve more effectively.

Partnering to serve parents better

From demonstration projects going back to the 1990s, such as Parents' Fair Share, to the current [Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration](#), OCSE is building an evidence base of service approaches designed to get parents working, paying support, and being active in their children's lives.

We work with the ACF [Office of Family Assistance](#) to support responsible fatherhood grant projects — many of which are awarded to organizations that serve communities of color — and to facilitate local partnerships between those grantees and child support offices.

We collaborate with the federal Bureau of Prisons to address child support issues for incarcerated and reentering parents. Our agencies work together to help inmates manage child support arrears, increase consistent payment of support, improve appropriate parent/child involvement, reduce recidivism, and successfully reconnect to family and community. We also work with the Department of Justice on several initiatives affecting minority parents. These include due process, legal aid and self-representation, examining fees and fines practices, incarceration for nonpayment of support, and reform of the justice system.

Improving child support reliability through innovative strategies

Over the past decade, a number of child support programs have demonstrated that a range of innovative strategies can improve the reliability of child support payments, particularly for the low-income families that

need child support most. In 2013, we launched a [series of fact sheets](#) to encourage child support professionals to incorporate family-centered strategies into their service delivery approach. The series discusses how and why the child support program provides innovative services to families across six interrelated areas including: Child Support Prevention; Family Violence Collaboration; Health Care Coverage; Healthy Family Relationships; Economic Stability, and Engagement of Fathers from Birth.

Our website contains many resources that, while not specifically for minority parents, can be informative and useful when providing program assistance, targeted outreach, or training in communities with large minority populations. These resources include [interactive maps](#) of child support agencies that provide supportive services along with traditional enforcement and [reentry resources](#). We also launched a [Families](#) page where parents and family members can find child support resources specifically for them.

For more information on OCSEs outreach to minority populations, contact James Murray at james.murray@acf.hhs.gov.



National Minority Health Month

April is [National Minority Health Month](#). This year's theme, "Accelerating Health Equity for the Nation," reflects continuous and collective efforts to achieve a nation free of disparities in health and health care. During this annual observance, HHS and the Office of Minority Health (OMH) join with partners and networks across the country to highlight national, state, tribal, territorial, and local efforts towards reducing racial and ethnic health disparities and advancing health equity.

If you are looking for ways to stay healthy, OMH has an online calendar that lists health events taking place in communities around the country. [See what's happening in your community.](#)

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Understanding health care special enrollment periods

Kathy Sokolik, Vice President, *The Center for the Support of Families*

As a public or private sector employee, you are probably familiar with the concept of an “open enrollment period” for health insurance. Generally near the end of the calendar year, employers provide details regarding health insurance options available for the next year. This is called the open enrollment period. Employees must enroll during the dates specified by the open enrollment period to have insurance for the next year. In addition to open enrollment, health insurance policies also have special enrollment periods that allow employees to request changes to their coverage based on a “qualifying life event” such as having a baby, getting married or divorced, or losing a job or health care coverage.

The Marketplaces also provide a special enrollment period that allows a consumer to purchase a new policy or change an existing policy within 60 days of the life event.

The Affordable Care Act’s federal and state Health Insurance Marketplaces operate on the same principle. The annual open enrollment period generally runs from early November to mid-December so coverage can start on January 1. The Marketplaces also provide a special enrollment period that allows a consumer to purchase a new policy or change an existing policy within 60 days of the life event.

Several life events can potentially affect families in the child support caseload. A special enrollment period can be triggered in the following ways:

- A new or modified court order containing medical support provisions is a qualifying event for parents who will need to enroll one or more children in health care coverage outside of the open enrollment period. Coverage can begin on the effective date of the court order as long as the parent enrolls in a plan within 60 days following the order’s effective date. See [Dear Colleague Letter 15-03](#) for more information.
- Parents escaping domestic violence, and their dependents, can enroll in their own health plan separate from the abusive partner, even if they are still married, by contacting the [Marketplace Call Center](#) and enrolling within 60 days.

Health resources for minorities



Hispanic resources

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of the Director launched a Spanish-language health information website,

[Portal de Información de](#)

[Salud de NIH](#). The website offers free, evidence-based health information from across NIH on topics ranging from child health to a Spanish-language newsletter. This mobile-friendly site includes translations of many health articles from the [NIH News in Health](#) publication, popular for its clear and to-the-point content.

The site also provides information on clinical trials from the [Clinical Research Trials and You website](#). This new information portal features a monthly column called Ask Carla ([Pregunta a Carla](#)), designed as an opportunity for readers to learn about Spanish-language resources available from NIH.



The Native One Stop Portal

[Benefits.gov](#), the official benefits website of the United States, launched a portal of resources for Native American, Alaskan

Native, and tribal populations. The portal, [NativeOneStop.Gov](#), provides information about available federal government services. Native One Stop conveniently houses links to any service these populations may need.

- Formerly incarcerated parents can enroll themselves and their dependents in Marketplace coverage following their release from prison. Probation, parole, and home confinement are all considered to be forms of release, while still under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

Understanding these kinds of provisions in the Affordable Care Act puts child support professionals in a unique position to help connect parents and children to quality, affordable health care coverage.

For more information, please go to the [HealthCare.Gov Incarcerated People](#) webpage or the [Special Enrollment Periods for complex issues webpage](#) and look for the ‘Other Complicated Case’ section.

Do healthy families initiatives conflict with performance measures?

Part 4 — Arrears collection and cost effectiveness

Gary W. Dart, retired Director, *Oklahoma Child Support Services*

Editor's Note: This is the final article adapted from a four-part Change Management series that explores the impact of "Healthy Families" principles on the five federal child support program performance indicators. Guest author Gary Dart wrote the original series for the Oklahoma Child Support Services newsletter before his retirement.



In previous articles, I shared my thoughts on a casework approach that engages customers and encourages reliable support without hurting our performance measures. The tension, of course, results from having to deal with our ever-increasing volume of cases while still devoting adequate time to the

relationships where we need to build trust and buy-in. It is a challenge faced by every child support program. So far in this series, I have explored how "Healthy Families" practices in Oklahoma actually help our performance measures on Current Support, Support Order Establishment, and Paternity Establishment. In this issue, let's look at our remaining measures, Arrears Collections and Cost Effectiveness, to see if progressive practices will help or hinder those as well.

Arrears collections

Contrary to what you might think by the title of this performance measure, it's not about how much we collect in total on arrearages. This measure is the percentage of cases with an arrears payment. We get this data by comparing cases that had any amount of collection (large or small) on their past due support to the total number of cases that have any kind of arrears (again, large or small) owed on them. To put it another way, this particular performance measure treats cases that have a \$1.00 collection just the same as cases with a huge lump-sum collection.

So what does that mean — should our goal be to try to get any kind of collection on cases with arrears? Well, that would indeed move the needle on this measure. What would improve performance even more? Reduce the number of cases that have any arrearages so that we won't

wear ourselves out trying just to get some level of payment on thousands of cases every day. This is where our Healthy Families principles come in.

The goal of Oklahoma's Healthy Families projects is to ensure parents reliably pay and receive their current support. Research has shown that children who reside in households where both parents are involved in supporting them on a regular and dependable basis have higher self-esteem, do better in school, and have brighter futures.

If we focus on getting customers to understand the program and buy in to our efforts to help them succeed, they are more likely to be compliant on their own. Being as transparent as possible, giving customers opportunities to have their say, and helping them learn about our work and their responsibilities improves buy-in and compliance. They still may not like the result, but the research says they are more willing to cooperate if they feel they have been fairly treated and that we want them to succeed.

Getting customers to buy in to our efforts and provide consistent, reliable, and dependable current support is the best possible outcome we can achieve.

When more current support is paid, there are fewer arrearages to collect which positively affects this performance measure. In situations where a customer does fall behind and we are unable to intervene promptly, we try to "right-size" orders and modify multiple cases so that the maximum amounts can be shared among all of the customer's cases. This aids in getting arrears paid and improving this performance measure.

For parents with needs that we can't address directly in the child support system, referring customers to community resources may also help them get on a better footing and increase their abilities to provide reliable support. Because we ultimately want the best possible outcomes for children and their families, child support programs that use Healthy Families principles will score better on this arrears collection measure and get more consistent results for those we serve.

Cost effectiveness

Our final performance measure is determined by looking at our program's total collections as compared to how much the program costs to run. In that sense, any kind of collection will help with this measure, but the reality is that this one is really about efficiency. Many Healthy Families remedies require us to take more time with customers than our traditional approach of implementing all of our

remedies at once. So does using the newer principles help rather than hurt our program cost-effectiveness? Yes, and here's why.

In this budgetary climate, we are unlikely to get additional resources from the state legislature, and some even fear that more cuts may be needed if revenues do not rise. We have to use our resources wisely. In the Healthy Families context, this means choosing remedies carefully and doing things with customers so we won't have to repeat case actions.

Getting customers to buy in to our efforts and provide consistent, reliable, and dependable current support is the best possible outcome we can achieve. Any "extra time" we take with customers to get them to that goal keeps us from investing countless extra hours later chasing delinquent customers. That allows us to use our resources in the most efficient way possible and helps this performance measure as well. That is the best outcome for us and for the families we serve.

For more information on this series, contact Jeff Wagner, OK Child Support Services Communications Director, jeff.wagner@okdhs.org.

COLLECTION SUCCESSES

Electronic income withholding takes over

Lynnetta Thompson, OCSE

Income withholding means that child support payments are automatically deducted from a noncustodial parent's paycheck or other source of income. Some states call the process garnishment, wage withholding, or wage attachment. Electronic income withholding orders (e-IWO) are beneficial to child support agencies and employers because they increase collections, improve communication, and provide withholding information in a consistent and uniform format. The process also reduces administrative costs such as paying for postage, buying paper, printing forms, and handling documents.

OCSE has been helping states and employers exchange income withholding orders electronically since 2008. In 2014, Congress passed legislation requiring all states to use the [OCSE e-IWO process](#) by Oct. 1, 2015. Before the legislation, 36 states were using electronic orders. By the end of 2015, an additional 14 states and territories joined the electronic age. Currently, 51 states and territories use the OCSE e-IWO process.

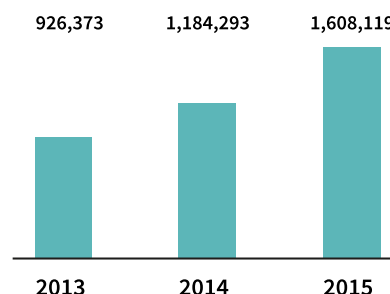
Employers receiving these orders benefit because the process eliminates paper and mail handling and the electronic orders are in a standard format. Using e-IWO has also reduced the number of customer service calls because employers can receive and implement the electronic orders much more quickly.

Since Congress required states to use the e-IWO process, the number of electronic orders has increased by 33 percent. In turn, more employers have jumped on the e-IWO train! As of Jan. 1, 2016, there were 1,003 employers — holding more than 9,000 Federal Employer Identification Numbers — using OCSE's e-IWO process.

Since the start of the program in 2008, OCSE has processed over 5 million orders electronically.

For more information, contact the OCSE Employer Services team at employerservices@acf.hhs.gov.

Electronic Income Withholding Orders Processed Annually



Previous change management articles and other resources

Child support programs must be able to adapt to and manage change effectively. OCSE is dedicated to providing articles like the one above to help offices manage change so they can meet the needs of families. Readers will find links to Gary Dart's previous articles on the [Managing Change in the Child Support Program](#) webpage under the 'Improve customer service' section.

PROMISING PRACTICES

New child support accountability court

Christine Towles and Yvette Perez-Trevino, *Illinois Division of Child Support Services*

In December 2015, Madison County, Illinois, announced the creation of an accountability court designed to help parents whose education or employability barriers left them unable to meet their child support obligations.

Madison County received recognition previously as a leader in the problem-solving court movement, having established the state's first veterans' treatment and mental health courts. While problem solving courts have been evolving and gaining momentum across the U.S. justice system, this is the first one in this area devoted to child support issues.

The court partnered with local community colleges, Madison County employment services, local employers, and the State's Attorney's office to create a committee to work on the process. Members identified barriers to employment first, and then they identified resources to overcome those barriers. From there, they developed three different tracks so parents could get targeted help with their employment search so they could ultimately meet their child support payments. (See box to the right.)

The office uses a screening process to determine whether the program will be a good fit for potential participants. Counselors from Madison County Employment and Training conduct evaluations of the noncustodial parents to determine which track best meets their needs.

Judges Maureen Schuette and Sarah Smith presided over the first accountability court docket on Feb. 9. Six individuals participated. Their next step is to meet with counselors at Madison County Employment and Training for evaluation and program placement. The counselors will send weekly status reports to the court. The participants will return to court periodically to update the judge on their progress and discuss any obstacles they encountered while they were completing their program track.

Monitoring is a key component because officials want to make sure individuals comply with court orders. They also want to identify and address issues participants might encounter. Noncustodial parents who do not comply must return to court to explain their actions before the judge.

While the initial plan is to hold the accountability court once a month, the county's ultimate goal is to serve as many families as possible and to expand the docket to twice a month.

For more information about the program, contact Accountability Court Committee Chairman Ann Callis at acallis@ghalaw.com or Assistant State's Attorney Tyler Wilke in the Madison County State's Attorney's Office at tbwilke@co.madison.il.us.

The three program tracks and activities

Employment and training

- Resumé building and writing seminars
- Assistance with online applications
- Interview preparation
- Access to internet for job searches
- Access to career counselors
- Assistance in obtaining professional certificates for occupations such as a commercial driver, welder, fork lift operator

Direct employment

- Career counselors arrange interviews with participating employers

GED/High School Education

- Local community colleges offer free classes
- Qualifying individuals receive educational financial assistance
- Students receive bus passes so they can travel to class



Judges Maureen Schuette and Sarah Smith.

Parenting time in San Diego

Anne Kelly, Child Support Manager, *San Diego County Department of Child Support Services*

In 2012, OCSE awarded [Parenting Time Opportunities for Children \(PTOC\) grants](#) so child support offices could study the relationships between parenting time, the child support establishment processes, and child and family well-being outcomes. The San Diego department set its PTOC goal at engaging at least 4,500 parents and establishing at least 300 parenting time orders during the two-year implementation period. The staff hoped that by establishing parenting time orders at the same time they established child support orders, they would increase child support collections and improve child/family relationships. The San Diego Association of Governments is assessing how effectively the county implemented the program by measuring various quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The evaluation will be completed by Sept. 30, 2016.

What are parenting time orders?

They outline the amount of time a child spends with each parent. Several states have child support programs that incorporate parenting time agreements into their child support orders.



Read more in [Child Support and Parenting Time: Improving Coordination to Benefit Children](#).

Domestic screening requirement

The county must ensure the safety and protection of the child and parents. As a result, all prospective applicants participate in comprehensive domestic violence screenings. Parents assessed as high risk are not eligible. The YWCA of San Diego County, a local non-profit agency with expertise at ending the cycle of domestic violence, developed the domestic violence screening tool and provides domestic violence resources to parents referred from the PTOC program.

Once the screening tool confirms that the parents can provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child, the parents meet with one of the superior court's family law facilitators. They are neutral court employees who help unrepresented parties set up a parenting time agreement.

continued

Parents recommend PTOC program

Laura and Craig dated for several years before Alexander was born. Two years after his birth, their relationship ended. Both parents had steady jobs, but Laura eventually applied for child support services because she wanted to make sure Alexander would receive consistent child support payments. As part of the order establishment process, Laura and Craig met with a caseworker to discuss and finalize a child support and parenting time order. After guided discussions, the parents eventually agreed to a combined monetary and parenting time order that allowed them the flexibility to adjust parenting time visits without having to go back to court.

After six months, a child support caseworker followed up with Craig and Laura to see how the agreement was working. Laura said she valued the program and explained how much she appreciated the support she received with a concern she expressed — Craig's excessive alcohol use and reckless behavior. Through discussions, Craig gained insight about how his decision to drink alcohol — sometimes to excess — influenced his relationships. He understood Laura's concerns about his alcohol abuse and how that affected the time he spent with Alexander. As a result, Craig joined Alcoholics Anonymous, which he believes helped him improve his relationships with Laura and Alexander.

Laura noticed that once Craig reached sobriety and his parenting time visits increased, Alexander's behavior also improved. She said he was doing better in school, was more respectful at home, and generally displayed a more positive disposition.

While both parents have moved on with separate lives, their interest in being good parents for Alexander still binds them together. Craig and Laura are proud of their role as parents successfully raising a child in separate households. Both say they would strongly recommend the program to other parents.

Other San Diego PTOC program eligibility requirements:

- Cases must involve both parents;
- Children cannot be in foster care or with a non-parent;
- Both parents must live in San Diego County;
- Children must have lived in California for at least the past 6 months;
- There cannot be a prior child support or parenting time order;
- There cannot be pending parenting time actions filed; and
- The children cannot be involved in juvenile court action.

Promising preliminary results

San Diego recently celebrated its 300th parenting time agreement. Current support collections stand at 84 percent compared to just over 71 percent for non-PTOC cases. In addition to these quantifiable benefits, the PTOC program has also improved the quality of parent-child relations with families that have parenting time agreements.

For information about the San Diego PTOC grant program, contact Anne Kelly at anne.kelly@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Just announced!

OCSE posted two grant opportunities for the Procedural Justice Informed Alternatives to Contempt Demonstration: one for [up to nine demonstration project grants](#) and the other for a [single evaluation award](#) to manage the evaluation of the PJAC project grants. State and tribal IV-D agencies can apply by July 8. Section 1115 grants are eligible for FFP matching funds.

Financial capability planning guide & video series

In March 2015, ACF published [Building Financial Capability: A Planning Guide for Integrated Services](#) (the Guide). The Guide is an interactive resource to help community-based organizations develop a plan for integrating financial capability services into existing programs such as housing, job training, or Head Start.

This month, ACF produced a series of five short training videos that provide instructions, tips, and examples for using the tools and resources in the Guide to begin integrating financial capability services or to improve or expand existing efforts. [In this first video](#), Jeannie Chaffin, the Director of the Office of Community Services, and Kate Griffin, the Vice President for Programs at the Corporation for Enterprise Development, describe the importance of financial capability integration and introduce the Guide.

If you have any questions or feedback, please email PlanningGuide@cfed.org.

New policy for verifying employment

In December 2015, Congress enacted the Fixing America's Surface Transportation [FAST Act](#) (Public Law 114-94) that will help state and local child support enforcement agencies. The new law eliminates barriers for child support agencies, employers, and third-party Verification of Employment (VOE) providers to effectively and efficiently provide employment information needed to establish, modify, and enforce support orders.

Child support staff members often request information from consumer reporting agencies when they are trying to determine the appropriate level of payments or enforce a child support order, award, agreement, or judgment. Section 80001 amends the section of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) by eliminating a requirement that child support agencies must notify noncustodial parents at least 10 days before they request information from a consumer reporting agency. State agencies were previously required to provide a notice by certified or registered mail to the noncustodial parent's last known address telling the parent it would be requesting information from a consumer reporting agency. Under this amendment, child support agencies can send VOE requests directly to third-party providers without first sending notice to the noncustodial parent.

The revised FCRA language will improve child support agencies' ability to quickly verify a noncustodial parent's employment status and income, which will result in more child support for families.

For more information, read [Dear Colleague Letter 16-01](#) or contact your regional office.

Child Support Report

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